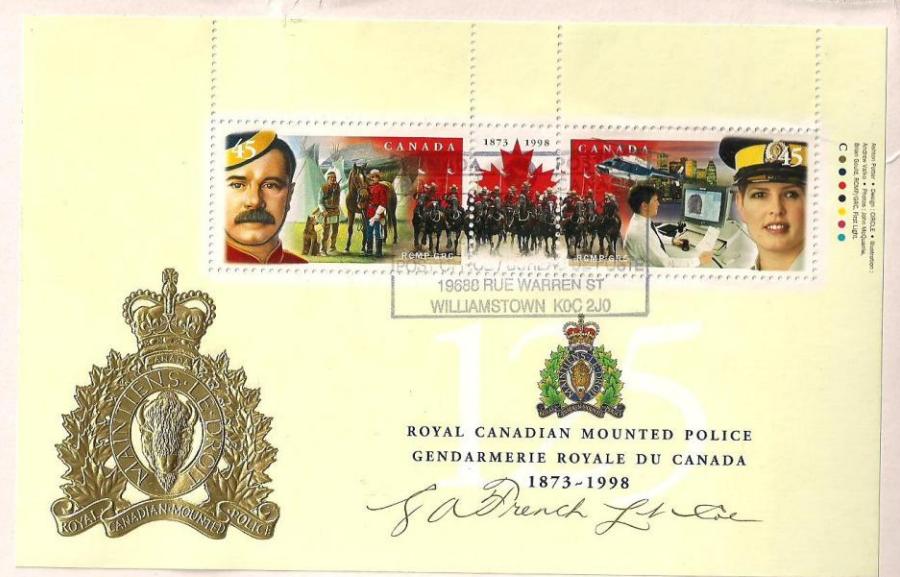


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05 Dec 2010

The present tract (The Anxious Sinner) by William Chalmers Burns dated 1843 would have been carried by the author to Canada when in the company of his eminent uncle, Rev. Robert Burns of the Glasgow Colonial Society, during the Great Disruption of 1844.

The Free Church of Scotland at Mertintown in Glengarry County, Canada, is named "The Burns Church" in honour of this W.C. Burns (see MacMillan - The Kirk in Glengarry).

It was in the library of the Rev. John Matheson (1846-1917) of Mertintown Burns Church, whose grandson Judge John Ross Matheson is the principal designer of Canada's present Maple Leaf flag.

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## ANXIOUS SINNER.

BY THE

REV. WM. C. BURNS.

TWENTY-SIXTH THOUSAND.

DUNDEE:  
W. MIDDLETON, 46 HIGH STREET.

MDCCCLIII.

THE  
ANXIOUS SINNER.

BY THE  
REV. WM. C. BURNS.

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THE

## ANXIOUS SINNER.

---

MY DEAR FELLOW SINNER,

There are none in whom I feel so deep an interest, and to whom I am so anxious at present to speak a word in season, as the class of those who have been brought to feel their sin and misery, as apostates from the love and service of the blessed God, but who have not yet found salvation in Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant. Those who are in this condition remind one of a person who is under the power of a deadly disease, and is in such a state that the slightest change for the better or for the worse may bring him back to life, or lay him prostrate in the cold iron grasp of death. Ah ! that is a time of awful interest ! Every pulse, every breath, every feature is watched by the weeping family around the bed ! It is true, that the case of the multitudes who are lying all around us cold and mo-

tionless in the grave of their trespasses,—as completely dead to the living God as the bones in the church-yard are to the living world,—ought to move the hearts of the children of God, and to make them cry aloud to Emmanuel, whose voice maketh the dead to live. It is true, also, that real Christians have need to cultivate a holy jealousy over themselves, and over all who seem to be alive to God, but who, alas! not unfrequently droop, and die, and go down to the Pit. But still it is the anxious, alarmed, conscience-stricken, law-condemned, wrath-pursued sinner, who is seeking rest, but finding none, that ought to engage the first attention and the most earnest prayers of the ministers and people of God. The state of such an individual is so very critical, that the very smallest circumstance, to human view, may either raise him to Heaven, or turn him over the precipice of sin into the yawning pit of Perdition! Therefore, while I would desire, in the following lines, to declare such truths of God's word as may be useful to all, I shall more specially address myself to the case of those who are *convinced* but not *converted*. May the Holy Spirit breathe with quickening, melting power upon my cold heart while I write, and upon yours, dear fellow-sinner, while you read what is written!

Allow me then, solemnly and affectionately, to call you to consider the following circumstances in your case.

I. YOUR STATE IS UNCOMMON. The true people of God are but a little flock in this world, and in this land. We have many church-goers, many communion-attenders, many so-called Christians, but, alas! few children of God, who have been born again of the Holy Ghost—who hate sin, and love Emmanuel, and follow after holiness, and lay up treasure in Heaven. And alas! anxious awakened sinners are even more rare. We may meet with individuals here and there who seem to be Christians; but how seldom do we see persons who seem to be under the awakening operations of the Holy Ghost! Men, in general, are at ease. Christians, alas! are too much at ease, and sinners are at ease; and when an individual is brought to see his lost condition, he can hardly find any one who feels like himself. Blessed be God, this is not so much the case in those places where the Holy Ghost has been lately poured out so abundantly upon the souls of sinners; and you may know perhaps a few around you, who are, like yourself, acquainted with spiritual anxiety. But still your case is uncommon. You meet with few that feel as you do,—with few that think they have need to be so much concerned about the soul,—and with some who are even disposed to mock at your anxiety. If you find this to be the case, do not be surprised, do not be staggered by it. It is a

truth, an undoubted truth, though the world hates it, and would gladly conceal, because it cannot alter it, that the gate of life is *a strait gate*, and that the way to Heaven is *a narrow way*. If you wish to go to Heaven in this day of general ungodliness and contempt of Jesus, you must not shrink from being singular, but must leave the crowd, and join yourselves to the little band of Christ's spiritual followers, who are wondered at, suspected, hated, and persecuted by the world of the ungodly, because their anxiety about salvation and their holy spiritual lives condemn the world, and proclaim aloud that it is lying under the wrath of God. Fear not, anxious sinner, to join the Lord's people, though they may be few in number where you live, and may be contemptible in the eyes of ungodly men. JESUS himself was despised, and hated, and persecuted, when he was on earth, and if they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more they of his household? Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you; and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Be not afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that shall be made as grass. Fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be afraid of their revilings; for the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm

shall eat them like wool; but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.<sup>1</sup> Consider, again,

II. YOUR STATE IS HOPEFUL. You know that there is no hope of any person being saved who goes on in the paths of open sin; on all such the devil *reckons* as his prey. They bear the brand of Hell on their brass-lined, Heaven-defying brows. Neither is there any hope of the unrenewed professor, whatever be his knowledge, his morality, his privileges, his office, his standing in the world, or in the Church. Such persons, continuing destitute of the new birth, are as certain to perish as those who live in open sin. And, what is more, they are even less likely, to human view, to be awakened to a sense of their lost state than open and abandoned transgressors, because they have more to put asleep, and to keep asleep the conscience, until the fires of Divine Judgment rouse it up to do its office. ANXIOUS SINNERS are the class out of whom the ranks of God's dear children are filled up; and every one who is under conviction of sin stands, as it were, a candidate for union to Christ and a place in the family of God. It is by a sense of sin and misery that the Holy Ghost begins his glorious saving work; it is thus that the way of

<sup>1</sup> Study 2 Cor. vi. 14-18, and Isaiah li.

Zion's King is prepared in the wilderness of the natural heart ; and therefore, dear fellow-sinner, while, it is true, you are not yet in a state in which it is safe or blessed to remain, you are in a state through which all must pass on the way to glory. This ought to encourage you to seek the mercy of the Lord, through Jesus Christ, and to make immediate humble, penitent, and earnest application to Jehovah, who is seated on the Throne of Grace, waiting to be gracious to the chief of sinners.<sup>1</sup> Consider, again,

III. YOUR STATE IS DANGEROUS. Alas ! there are comparatively few, even in this the day of the Lord's great mercy to our favoured land, who seem to tremble at His word, and to ask in earnest, " What must I do to be saved ?" and yet, among those who are brought under anxiety about their souls, many are not saved. You may be anxious, and yet not thoroughly awakened. You may be convinced of your danger, and may tremble with the faith of devils, and yet not be convinced of the evil and heinousness of sin as it opposes the law and the nature of the holy God, defaces the image of God in the human soul, and pierces the Lord of Glory. Alas ! I have myself known many such cases. Some, like Felix, have trembled, but, like Felix, have turned away from

<sup>1</sup> Study Isaiah Iv., and Luke xv.

Christ. Some have been, with Agrippa, *almost saved*, and yet, with Agrippa, will be *altogether lost*. Yea, some have gone farther than this. They have wept, they have prayed, they have read their Bibles, they have gone to prayer-meetings, they have forsaken their worldly companions, they have seemed to be entirely changed, and yet, after a time, they have returned as the dog to his vomit, and as the sow that was washed to his wallowing in the mire ! Such an one has become, like Saul the king, "*another man*," but not, like Saul the Pharisee, "*a new man*."<sup>1</sup> Sin has *not* been driven *out* of the heart, but has rather been driven up *into* the heart. It lies hid for a time, but it is hid in the Citadel, and, at a convenient opportunity, it comes forth and again takes possession of the whole soul. Ah ! then, dear fellow-sinner, beware of thinking you are safe, because you have shed tears, and have been all on fire to get to Jesus, as you have thought, and as others may have hoped. It is not a sense of sin that saves a man,—it is not repentance,—it is not reformation,—it is *Christ and Christ alone* ; and, therefore, it is only when you accept of Him as your atoning High Priest, and yield yourself to Him as your Sovereign Lord, that you are safe, and cannot come into condemnation, but have passed from death to life. Oh ! it is infi-

<sup>1</sup> See 1 Samuel x. 6—9.

nitely awful to think of being eternally lost, and of lying down amid everlasting flames, without a drop of water to cool the parched tongue. The only drops of water that are to be got in Hell are the briny, bitter tears of a repentance that comes too late! Oh! strange that any reasonable being can rest a single moment without the certainty of escaping such a doom. Mad, infatuated world, that can spend its moments of reprieve and respite from the wrath of an almighty and eternal God in ease and carelessness! Yet there is something, were it possible, even more awful than this in the perdition of an anxious inquirer after the Saviour. Such an one has had the eye opened to see the approaching doom of the ungodly, his conscience hears the distant muttering thunders of God's vengeance, the awful stillness that precedes the forked lightning settles on his soul, he is on the very point of entering in at the gate of life, of taking refuge in the wounds of the man who is God's fellow—in the clefts of the Rock of Ages, rent to afford a hiding-place for sinners in the day of wrath—and yet, after all, he is not saved! He trifles with conviction, he loses his opportunity, he grieves the Spirit of Grace, he secretly rejects the Son of God, he seals his own destruction! Ah, yes! and remember, also, that if you follow after sin, amid the arrows of conviction, and reproof, and warning from the Lord,

your condemnation will be far more awful than that of those who have never been thus visited. The Gospel kills where it does not cure. We *may* refuse to know it so as to be saved, but we *cannot* avoid knowing it so as to be condemned. And if we despise the bleeding Saviour, and resist the Holy Spirit, we shall wish in Hell that we had been Hindoos or Mahomedans. Ah! there are none of whom Satan takes so desperate a grasp as those who had once nearly escaped from his chains. There are none who will endure so much of the wrath of the Lamb as they who "trample him under foot," and, as it were, make a way for themselves to the Pit over the bleeding body of the Son of God! Come, then, now, dear fellow-sinner, let *this* be the hour, *this* the blessed moment, of your cordially accepting Jesus, and passing from death unto life. He waits to be gracious; he is near, he is able, he is ready to save you. Oh! yield the heart to him *at once*, and at once you pass from the number of those anxious souls whose case is dangerous and doubtful, to the number of those who believe and who are sealed by the Holy Ghost unto the day of redemption. Oh, sinner, where is your heart? has Jesus got it? I cannot, I dare not, go farther till you yield, and put the crown upon Emmanuel's head.<sup>1</sup> Consider, in conclusion,

<sup>1</sup> Study 2 Cor. v. 11—21; vi. 1, 2.

IV. MANY EYES ARE UPON YOU. This remark may perhaps at first sight seem strange to you. You may be unknown in the world, and few may seem to care whether you live or die,—be saved or perish; but, my dear friend, you know that things of little consequence in themselves sometimes become of great importance from particular circumstances. Men of a contentious spirit will dispute as vehemently about a trifle as about a treasure. Their honour (alas! they have little) is at stake, and therefore they refuse to yield a single hair's breadth. So it is in this case. You know that, on this earth, the prince of darkness and the Lord of Glory are contending for victory and dominion, and that all men take part either with the Lord or with Satan. Every soul that Jesus begins to alarm or to allure is in danger of being lost to Satan, and that soul becomes a battle-field, on which Satan and Emmanuel contend for victory. It is of little consequence to the creation of God whether a puny worm like me be saved, or be lost; but, when Satan and Emmanuel are contending about me, it is of *infinite* consequence whether God or the devil shall prevail, and have dominion. In this way every individual who is concerned about salvation becomes important, unspeakably important, and attracts notice not only on Earth, but in Heaven, and in Hell. The UNGODLY around you desire to see you com-

ing back to their condemned company, and following them, in the downward paths of sin and vanity, to death and destruction. They would rejoice to see your tears dried up, your serious countenance laughing as of old, your singularity, as they call it, laid aside; they will try many methods to make you join their company, their dance, their glass, their song; and thus they would lure you with them to the Pit. Beware, O sinner! avoid the *appearance* of evil, if you wish to avoid the *reality* of it; resist the *beginning*, if you do not wish to see the *end*. The *end* of these things is death! On the other hand, THE LORD'S PEOPLE, as far as they are like to Jesus, are labouring and praying that you may be savingly converted; they tremble lest you should ruin your soul, and dishonour the name of Jesus, by returning to the world; and oh! how they would rejoice to see you meekly, and purely following the Lamb, adorning the doctrine of the Gospel, and running for the crown of life. Ah! shall their labours and their prayers be all in vain? Shall we who have preached and prayed for your conversion, stand up in the day of Judgment to condemn you to the flames? I shudder at the thought! But again, though you may be little conscious of it, SATAN is contending with all his guile and malice to ruin you. In this hellish work of deceit and murder, the devil seldom shows himself without a

mask. If he did, he would scare away his prey. Oh! how could his willing captives still love his baits, and his flatteries, and his chains, if they saw him in his true character, as the roaring lion ready to devour their souls? The devil works unseen, that he may work successfully. He speaks by the voice of your own heart, and by the mouth of those around you whom you love, that he may speak with power, and lead you captive at his will. They that resist sin, resist the devil; they that obey sin, obey the devil, though unseen. And, more than this, while the devil plots your ruin, and seeks by every means, fair or foul, to keep you from giving your heart to Jesus, the ANGELS in heaven are longing for your conversion, and stand, as it were, ready to break forth into a shout of praise and joy, when you touch the hem of Jesus' garment, and are saved. Oh! shall the golden harps of Heaven be never used in rejoicing over you? Nay more, to crown the whole, JEHOVAH himself has his eye upon you, and condescends so infinitely far as to be interested in your doom. Behold! he pleads, he waits, he beseeches, he commands you to embrace the offers of his free and everlasting love! Shall the rejection of the love of God consign you to the lowest Hell? Oh! shall his mercy never bless and glorify your soul? Dear fellow-sinner, you engage the interest of Heaven, Earth, and Hell at once; and can you

think that you are sufficiently alive to your danger?—that you feel aright your need of *instantly* giving the heart to Christ? Shall *you* be less anxious to escape from coming wrath, and to lay hold on future glory, than the God of love, with saints and angels, is to see you saved? yea, than wicked men and devils are to see you damned? Oh! madness to be lulled asleep by the deceiver and murderer of souls! to be cheated out of the inheritance of Heaven by those apostate spirits who never had an offer of a Saviour, and who grudge God's unspeakable gift to a dying world. Oh! how foolish will poor sinners look in hell, when the very devils tell them that they might have been saved, had they not madly been in love with death! It will make the pit tenfold more insufferably awful to lost sinners when they think that they might have been in Heaven, had they been wise in time, and embraced God's offered mercy.

Trembling sinner, have you heard the thunders of the Law at Sinai? have you seen the lightning-flash of God's indignation? Oh! then, look to Calvary, and behold the sword of eternal justice awaking against Jehovah's Shepherd, the man who is God's fellow! Behold EMMANUEL, a God-given surety, standing in the sinner's place, magnifying the holy law, satisfying offended justice, pacifying incensed holiness, and quenching

the flames of wrath for all who believe in his name, and trust in his blood ! Oh, dear sinner ! delay not a moment, but look to Jesus and be saved. Look to him and wonder, look and live, look and love, look and be sanctified, look and be glorified !<sup>1</sup>

Do you say, Alas ! I try to look to Jesus, but I can obtain no view of his glory which will pacify the conscience or satisfy the heart ? All is darkness—all is confusion—all is trouble. If it is so, beware lest you are speaking with *secret* insincerity, lest you are *secretly* rejecting Jesus, as he is *freely* offered to you from the Throne of God, and *secretly* keeping hold of some idol which he calls you to abandon. Beware lest you are making a righteousness of your anxiety, a saviour of your feelings or your faith. See that you consider Jesus as *all your salvation*; thus you shall find him to be *all your desire*. Go to the Throne of Grace, and humbly tell the Lord that you desire to be saved by Jesus—plead for the Holy Spirit to enlighten you savingly in the knowledge of him, and though he seem to disregard your cry, lay hold of the promises of mercy, trample unbelief under foot, resist the devil, and wait upon the Lord. At last, in his own good time, he *will* bring you forth to the light, and you *shall* behold his righteousness ; and you will

<sup>1</sup> Study *Isaiah* liii. and lv.

then sing joyfully to his praise in the words of that blessed Psalm, which is so sweet to awakened souls,

"I waited for the Lord my God,  
And patiently did bear,  
At length to me he did incline,  
My voice and cry to hear," &c.—PSALM XL.

Dear fellow-sinner, if, instead of patiently *waiting* on the Lord, you are tempted to prefer the cordials and comforts of the world, which the devil will have ready at hand to help you—to help you to the Pit !—oh ! remember that the distress of an awakened soul is many leagues nearer Heaven than the ease and security of a sinner who is settled on his lees. Yes ! the distress of a penitent is unspeakably better than the peace of a proud professor, or of a heart-seared profligate. It is infinitely better as an heir of Heaven to walk in darkness, than as an heir of Hell to walk in light ! The darkness of the penitent will *soon* give place to the bright shining of the Sun of Righteousness, which will at last be perfected in that land of glory where there shall be no night for ever ! The candle of the ungodly will *soon* be put out amid that blackness of darkness which reigns eternally unbroken in the grave of dead souls, the prison of unclean spirits ! Oh ! poor sinner, *wait* on Jesus, for "the Lord is good to the soul that seeketh him, and they that wait on

me," he saith, " shall not be ashamed."<sup>1</sup> It is good that a man both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of God. May *you* find it so, dear fellow-immortal, in your blessed experience, and rejoice eternally in the Lamb. I shall in the mean time commend you to the grace of the Lord Jesus, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit; and

I am,

DEAR FELLOW SINNER,

Your Friend and Servant,

In the Lord Jesus,

W.M. C. BURNS.

<sup>1</sup> Study Lamentations iii.

From: Peter-John Parisis <[peterjohnparisis@gmail.com](mailto:peterjohnparisis@gmail.com)>  
Date sent: Sun, 5 Dec 2010 11:18:29 -0500  
Subject: Re: AbeBooks Customer Inquiry: Title:The Anxious Sinner  
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Flint, Michigan 48503  
810-728-4367 (cell)

P.S. I am enjoying the final day ( I hope ) of a terrible sickness that has lasted 3 weeks. That is why I am not in church at this moment.

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